



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Darlene Lee
616-233-3553
dlee@visitgrandrapids.org

August 15, 2005

“Grand Rapids: Traditionally Innovative...Traditionally Creative”

Grand Rapids, MI – Grand Rapids, the grand city of Michigan’s West Coast notable history of design innovation first surfaced in the late 1880s when the region was known as “America’s Furniture Capital,” with 44 furniture companies producing “Grand Rapids Furniture.” Today, that tradition of ingenuity and innovation, combined with a strong work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit, has solidly established Grand Rapids as a leader in the fields of manufacturing and medical technology, contributing to a progressive forecast for employment, development and production.

- The Van Andel Research Institute, a leading cancer research facility, and Grand Valley State University recently launched the West Michigan Science and Technology Initiative which will serve as a hub for technology and product development. Over the last 25 years, the life sciences have become a remarkably fast growing industry in Grand Rapids, pushing the region forward as a significant center for life science and cutting edge medical and biomedical technology.
- In an increasingly environmentally conscious world, area businesses are embracing Sustainable Development, Green Building and business practices that eliminate waste and toxic materials and create recyclable products. Companies such as Steelcase, Herman Miller and Cascade Engineering are leaders in Sustainable Business practice. Grand Rapids itself ranks #7 in the U.S. in registered Green Building projects.
- Grand Rapids ranked in the top 50 Creative Class communities in Dr. Richard Florida’s *Creative Class Theory*. As a result, Grand Rapids has been awarded grants, as part of Michigan’s Cool City initiative, for two projects – *The Avenue for the Arts Project* and *The Uptown Revitalization Project*. These projects will involve historic revitalization, retail development using green building practices, streetscape improvements and the development of downtown living spaces. The Cool City initiative is an economic strategy based on encouraging people, particularly young professionals, to live, work and play in the “Cool City.”

- A historically established domain for the furniture design industry, Grand Rapids and West Michigan have been deemed the *Office Furniture Capital* of the world. Companies such as Steelcase, Herman Miller, Haworth and Knoll are leaders in innovative furniture design and the promotion of productive, creative working environments. In the presence of these furniture industry giants, and with Kendall College of Art and Design, where nearly 90% of the world's furniture designers hone their skills, Grand Rapids/Kent County has an unmatched design conscience and creative energy.
- The City of Grand Rapids has been ranked among America's top "mid-size cities" places to live, work and play. Partners for Livable Communities, a nonprofit organization in Washington, recently named Grand Rapids "*one of the best places in America to be.*" A vibrant, walkable city center, a wide variety of entertainment venues, an impressive restaurant scene and plenty of outdoor activities all contribute to the draw of Grand Rapids for residents and visitors alike.
- Family entertainment for residents and visitors of the Grand Rapids area include golfing, boating, sailing, fishing, hunting, camping, snow skiing, snow boarding, skate parks and biking, leading the area to rank No. 3 in the "fun and recreation" category by *Places Rated Almanac*.
- A Sperling's Best Places survey recently named the Grand Rapids metro area as one of "Americas *Best Cities for Dating.*" Over 44% of the population in Grand Rapids is under the age of 30, contributing to the area's "single factor."
- A study by the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* ranked the Michigan's West Coast region as the second most generous in the country due to the residents' annual philanthropic activity. On a large scale, this philanthropy is readily visible in the downtown revitalization efforts. Within the redevelopment of the last quarter century, the private sector has taken the lead in corporate contributions to public development including the DeVos Place convention center, Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, the Van Andel Institute, the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park and several contributions to area healthcare institutions.
- Products developed and manufactured in the Grand Rapids/Kent County region impact daily lives around the world – from office furniture designed for more productive and enjoyable environments, to the biopharmaceuticals developed at the world-class medical research facility at the Van Andel Research Institute; and from the technology and product innovation in Automotive Supplies, to the daily household products of Bissell Homecare and Alticor (formerly Amway).

For additional information about all that Grand Rapids has to offer, consumers may contact the Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau online at

www.visitgrandrapids.org, or toll-free at 1-800-678-9859.

#